



CONSERVATION RESERVE PROGRAM PLANT GUIDE

SHEEP FESCUE

Cultivars: Covar, Big Horn, MX-86,
SR 3000

Seed Size: 680,000 seeds/pound

Form: Bunchgrass, 10-16" tall,
Fine green leaves, Panicle
Seedhead

Area of Adaptation: 'Covar' sheep fescue is adapted to areas of the Inland Pacific Northwest that receive between 11 and 20 inches of annual precipitation. 'Covar' originates from a collection made in Turkey. It is also adapted to much of the Northern Rocky Mountains, Northern Great Plains, and Northern Great Basin. 'Covar' grows well on well drained sandy loams to clay loams. 'Big Horn', 'MX-86', and 'SR 3000' are turf types that are adapted to the Pacific Northwest but generally require irrigation. The turf types tend to be very uniform grasses that require lower maintenance than other turf grasses such as Kentucky bluegrass. They are less drought tolerant than 'Covar'.

Seeding: Sheep fescue is small seeded and must be seeded no deeper than 1/2". A firm seedbed that allows for good seed to soil contact is necessary for good emergence. Seeding should be completed late in the fall or very early in the spring. It germinates readily at very cool temperatures and grows somewhat slowly after emergence.

Since sheep fescue is commonly seeded as a mixture with other grass species, adding rice hulls or vermiculite to the mix helps to ensure proper flow through the drill openings.

Broadcast seeding should only be considered for fields that are too loose to pack. Light harrowing can improve stand establishment. Harrowing immediately prior to broadcasting is generally superior to harrowing after broadcasting. Harrowing after seeding can result in deep seed burial.

Management & Uses: Sheep fescue is an important introduced cool season grass. It develops a tremendous root system and is very competitive with weeds. Sheep fescue is not a preferred forage for most livestock. The leaves are short and wiry. It is an excellent reseeder. Sheep fescue and hard fescue are commonly used along highway right-of-ways in eastern Washington to prevent soil movement on road cuts and suppress weed growth.

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